

From Hetfelle to Hatfield - over 1000 years of history

HATFIELD LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER No. 122 September 2021

THE HOUSES THAT JACK BUILT

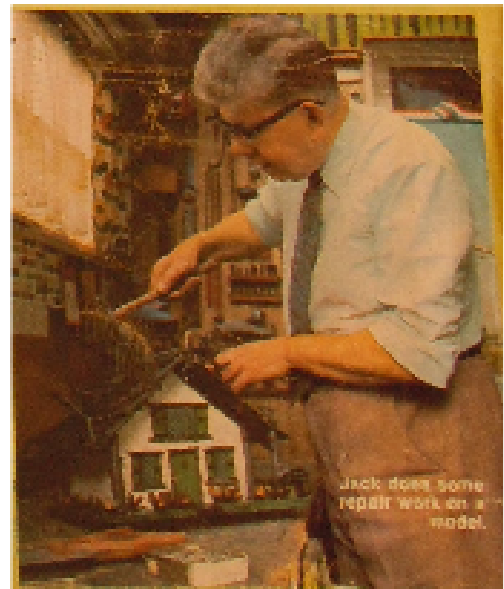
Our June 1995 newsletter contained a Daily Telegraph article by Ann Elkins who described a return visit to the Old Town and a particular house she recalled near the top of Church Street, which had *".....a little finger of a garden, long and extremely thin, on the hill leading to the church in Hatfield. It was like an elaborate sponge cake. A brilliant display of old fashioned flowers was planted beside the narrow path. Then came, just above that, inverted bottles on sticks, from the hollow bases of which grew more flowers, some trailing, some upright. Above that, on bird-tables, were a dozen or more model houses. It sounds grotesque but it was glorious. Recently in the area, I went to remind myself of it, (but) the garden had vanished without a trace."*

The garden she described was at the front of the house belonging to Jack and Emily Flegg, being next door to the former Bakers Arms pub. They lived in the Old Town for 50 years and when, during the early 1960s, Jack learnt of the impending modernization of the area he knew this would necessitate in the removal of many historic buildings. He decided to keep a photographic record of what stood before the demolition gangs arrived and borrowed a Box Brownie camera. Many of the photos he took back then are ones we are familiar with now.

For 30 years, Jack worked as a grocer at the International Stores in the Old Town, but much of his leisure time was spent lovingly tending his garden and, in 1969, his interest in 'house building' began with the repair of a dilapidated blue tit's nest box which his young daughter couldn't bear to see thrown away.

Jack effectively reworked it to become a miniature cottage with doors, shutters and a red roof. He put it back in the garden and was pleasantly surprised when it gained a lot of interest from passers-by. A new hobby had begun!

His next model was of the Bakers Arms followed by the Eight Bells and the former Market House (now long gone) and a nearby timbered Tudor cottage. He complemented these with some fictitious models such as the thatched pub Ye Peck o' Malt,



Jack working on a model

Contact the Editors:

c/o Mill Green Museum, Hatfield, AL9 5PD

Email: contact@hatfieldhistory.uk

Chairman: **Phil Marris**





The Market House model.
Image kindly supplied by Mill
Green Museum (WEWHM:

Cartwheel Cottage, a mill, Twitchells, and a Gnomes house. Included within his collection were two models named after a different Hatfield in Essex; Peverel Magna and a mini cottage called Cherry Peverel which he designed as a dream retirement home for he and his wife, replete with red tiled flooring, oak beams and homely brasses for décor. A small annexe was added with a workshop for himself and a sewing room for Emily to do her tapestry.

Sadly, Jack's retirement home did not materialize and he spent his final years living in Acacia Street in South Hatfield. He died aged 85 in 1994.



**Left: Jack's model of
The Eight Bells**

COLTS ON THE RYDE by Hazel Bell

In 1957 my husband and I moved into a fourth-floor flat in one of the blocks at Stanborough Green, WGC. Five years later, expecting our first child, we were anxious to build our own home – but our search for land to build on in WGC was in vain.

Then Pat, a secretary where my husband, Colin, worked (at British Rubber Producers' Research Association), told him that she and her husband had found land to be rented in Hatfield, bordering WGC. This was The Ryde, owned by the Salisbury Estate, which was then being developed. Houses were already occupied along one edge, beside the A414 – this was popularly known as Millionaire's Row. Deep in the heart of the estate lay a large field, now being divided into plots. Pat and Alan Fulwood purchased Plot 626 for £400 in May 1962. Pat then told Colin of wooden house modules they had found in Kent, for sale, whose components could be transported by lorry and erected on site: Colt Houses. They went ahead: chose their Colt house and found a local builder, Gorden Kime, who revised the plan through 90 degrees to fit their site and built their bungalow. They moved into their new home in 1963, calling it (appropriately, for a timber-frame house) "Woodcote" – the Post Office did not allocate house numbers for the area until 1965, when theirs was designated no. 72 The Ryde.

Theirs was the second house erected on what became the loop of The Ryde's chief road: a wooden bungalow next to a two-storey house. Alan, commuting to London, once heard a fellow passenger look through the train window at the two houses, solitary in the otherwise empty field, and observe, "What an odd chap must live there – he has those enormous grounds, and builds his garage right up by his house".

Colin and I copied the Fulwoods at every stage. We leased a plot in the field backing on to

what would become The Ryde School, across the virtual – yet to be – road from the Fulwoods'. We drove to Bethersden in Kent to see the Colt Houses' showplace. It was a fascinating display; the various types of their residences were filled with harpsichords, which the father of the proprietor collected!

Like the Fulwoods, we chose a three-bedroom bungalow from the various options on show. We profited from their experience, engaging the same builder, Gordon Kime. He now knew how to adapt the design of Colt bungalows to turn through 90° to fit the initially incompatible shape of sites, having done so for theirs.

Our site was bulldozed on 3 February 1963; Gordon and his father-in-law dug the foundations; and we awaited delivery of the timber frame of our house. It arrived on 28 June 1963. A telephone network was installed on The Ryde, with overhead wires. Colin had to dissuade the Council from planting a telegraph pole at the top of our drive.



The house foundations are completed.....



A delivery of the Colt components arrives

Colin eagerly participated in the venture, in the evenings and at weekends, installing all the plumbing and electrical wiring himself. By then our first child was toddling, and I was pregnant again, so unable to help with the erection. My part was to make curtains for our new home. Our Colt had full, deep windows all along the living-room, needing curtains so large that I could not spread them out on the floors of our flat, but had to do it on the grass area in front of Stanborough Green.

When a couple from the ground floor of the block of flats moved out, we successfully applied to move down to occupy that one until our house was occupiable. It proved to be the only flat in the block of sixteen that had no telephone. Applying to have one installed, we were told that the full fee of £300 would be due; as we hoped to move out soon, we declined to pay so much, and I remained incommunicado, alone at home each evening hemming curtains.

In February 1964 we moved into Plot No. 163 as house numbers - which were allotted by the Post Office- had still not been allotted to homes in the still mostly undeveloped area. Likewise there were no road-name signs. Lacking a house number, we gave our house a name – Carillon, to suit a family of Bells. Our address thus was simply Carillon, The Ryde. Would-be visitors rarely succeeded in finding us.

Eventually we were accorded a house number – 139 – and road-name signs appeared over The Ryde estate, showing that our road was simply – and unhelpfully – named The Ryde. Our visitors were still bewildered. We also acquired neighbours, and a pavement on which to push the pram. There was even a third Colt bungalow, nearby at no. 88, inhabited by Michael Clark (Head of Onslow School) and his wife. Angela Clark liked the wooden



The timber-framed walls are erected.....



The Colt house takes shape

panelling we had in our dining area, and wrote to Colt's to ask for wooden panelling in hers. Colt's clearly muddled the houses they had on The Ryde, and wrote to tell Angela that her house already had wooden panelling!

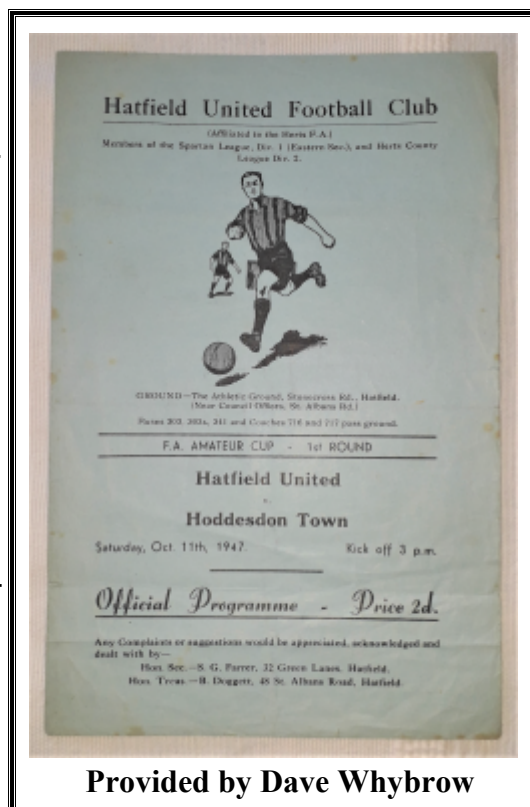


Left: the finished house

In January 2019 the first Colt on The Ryde, No. 72, was used for filming scenes in *Wild Bill*, a British ITV comedy-drama series. Our house, No. 139, was used as a Green Room for the cast – for which we were handsomely paid, and also allowed to help ourselves to lunch from the film set's mobile canteen!

HATFIELD UNITED FC: before and after WW2

Hatfield United Football Club remain the most successful side the town has produced, but either side of the War their fortunes fluctuated. They began the 1938/39 season as Herts County League champions and winners of the Bingham Cox Cup – a cup they'd won for the third year running. But their appetite for more silverware involved entering other competitions which would necessitate in more travelling expenses. As a consequence, they increased entry fees at Stonecross Road from 4d to 6d for adults, and many fans complained to the Supporters Club. However, United became County League champions again and were promoted to the Spartan League. When war came, just a month into the 1939/40 season, the club suspended all senior football. Six years later, the club resumed playing back at Stonecross Road and were fortunate that their pitch had not been dug up for allotments to help the war effort. They just avoided relegation as the club struggled to adapt to the higher level of the Spartan League, finishing 3rd from bottom in the 1946/47 season and 2nd to last the following term. The programme opposite is of their first round FA Amateur Cup game in October 1947 against Hoddesdon Town, which they lost 1-3.



Provided by Dave Whybrow

Message from the Chairman

Our new meeting venue: Following the closure of Friendship House, the committee has chosen Hatfield Social Club as our new meeting venue.

The club is opposite the station car park and its postal address is 76 Great North Rd, Hatfield AL9 5ER.

It has off-street parking, good physical access and a meeting room in first-class condition, with wooden tables, decent chairs, inbuilt projector & screen and different types of refreshment.



Hatfield Social Club

Diary Dates: the committee has booked two meetings at the new venue:

- Monday, 13 Sept. 2021 (2-4 p.m.): This will partly be a social gathering but where Alastair Cameron will also present a brief talk on, "The varying fortunes of the Hatfield & St Albans Railway." (a good chance to test the projector technology.)
- Monday, 13 December 2021 (2-4 p.m.): This will be a social meeting so please, as usual, bring along your various artefacts for others to look at.

Note: Should Covid-19 restrictions be reimposed, these meetings will obviously not go ahead. Otherwise, **we hope to see as many of you as possible.**

Call for volunteer: After twelve years, Jon Brindle and Sheila Whittingham have decided to stand down as editors of the quarterly newsletter. They have more than served their time and, on behalf of members, I would like to express appreciation for the quality of the publication over such a long period. **We now urgently need a volunteer** to take over the editorship, starting in 2022. Otherwise, the newsletter will fall into abeyance. If you are interested, please email contact@hatfieldhistory.uk or phone me on 01707 892597.

Phil Marris (Chairman)

Old "Old Hatfield"

We often receive interesting contacts via our website, a recent one coming from Malcolm Harvey who lives in Surrey and whose late mother, Eileen Smith, was brought up in Hatfield in the 1900s.

Malcolm has generously donated a large collection of around 120 postcards, dating mostly from the first decade of the Twentieth Century. Some show scenes of Old Hatfield whilst many others feature famous stage stars of that era.

The postcards were predominantly addressed to Miss Cecily A Smith, but I think Cecily must have been a pet name as, although the Smith family is easy to locate in Hatfield records, there is no official mention of someone named Cecily.

One can tell from the postcards that the Smith family was living at 29 Primrose Cottages until around 1907 when they moved to Malting Mead. Brian Lawrence has helpfully pinned down Malting Mead for me:

Probably semi-detached, these houses stood in French Horn Lane in an elevated position just beyond the railway bridge on the right-hand side as one walked up from the Old Town. They were almost opposite the cottages in Glebeland (which still stand) and were probably demolished in the 1960s.

Some of the postcards were written in shorthand, so one assumes that Cecily Smith and her correspondents were secretaries (or secret agents?). Around thirty of them feature Miss Zena Dare, a star of the Edwardian stage. Cecily Smith must have had some special interest to have focused on this one individual and I did wonder if Zena Dare was related to John Dare and John Sheehan-Dare of Hatfield schoolmaster fame – but my quick checks revealed no apparent link.

Brian also commented on a Hatfield postcard that he hadn't seen before, but which appears to be celebrating the King & Queen's visit to Hatfield on 12th June 1909 (see Brian's book, *Changing Times*, pp.27-31).

The decorations appear to be spanning the London Road from Gray's Garage to the old London Road School on the other side of the road.

Finally shown is the funeral of the Third Marquess of Salisbury in 1903 at St Etheldreda's, with Prime Minister Balfour in attendance.

If room in the December newsletter, I hope to include one or two more postcards plus mention of another of Malcolm Harvey's kindly donated artefacts – a rare copy of a biography of Richard Thompson Gunton (1846-1921), secretary to the Third Marquess.

Phil Marris

